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26 Bn. H.Q.
2 N.Z. Div.,
M.E.F.
11 July, 1943.

No. 2, 3

Received
11/2/1074

Dear Mum & Dad,

Here I am with the second part of my Palestine letter. For the first three days in camp Alan & I took walks about the place to see where everything was. We found it a well appointed camp with every sort of convenience. There were two cinemas for concerts & talkies, one indoors & one out of doors; a library, tennis courts, barber, bootmakers, several N.A.A.F.I.'s (Navy, Air Force & Army Institutes) where one can always get a meal, buy tobacco, soap, & other necessary articles. There was also a dhobi, or native laundry where our washing was done. The Camp was free to ranks except for sets. & we had only a very small mess fee to pay of 15 piastres a week (3/-). Could



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ON ACTIVE SERVICE

2/ the meals were as good as you could get at a hotel (thanks to the Italian cooks!) the only work we had to do was make our beds each day & even that needn't have been done if you didn't feel inclined. A hundred yards in front of the Sgt's mess hall was the beach, at the foot of cliffs some eighty feet high with a path - very slippery down from above. The beach was sandy & the water beautifully clear & warm. The local people (Zerish settlement people) used to bathe & sun bathe there too.

In the evenings after the heat of the day, we would stroll to the township a mile away & there sit at a small table drinking cold orange juice or grape-fruit juice or lime & lemonade & watch the local lasses walking up & down the main street. Everyone young & old comes out for a lemonade in the cool of the evenings. The programme in these



31

warm countries seems much the same — work during the mornings, siesta during the heat of the afternoon, & promenade in the cool of the evenings.

On the fourth day we boarded the Jerusalem bus in camp & set off for the holy city. It was a very pleasant run of about 50 miles, the road being at first class bitumen one, but very twisting owing to the hilly nature of the country. In fact, it was just one mass of hills, most of them stony & rocky with the slopes terraced. They were fairly steep hills too & there were many sharp bends. I think you would have been "wind up" through especially at the "Seven Sisters" where the road descends very steeply in a series of exceedingly sharp bends. The bus drivers go fairly fast too. Just before noon we reached our destination — Jerusalem, built on four hills originally, but now spread out over many more with



NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FUND BOARD

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

41

very modern & well built stone buildings. I was very taken by the place. It was in fact a pleasant surprise to see such a picturesque city with so many trees. We booked in at the St. Andrew's Hostel (which had previously been an hotel) & had lunch.

At 2 P.M. we boarded a bus to go on the Jericho - Dead Sea trip. Here again we travelled on a first class bitumen road & one couldn't help thinking back 2000 years & picturing the road as it was then - rough & dusty. We skirted round the Mount of Olives, passing the Garden of Gethsemane on the way & after a few miles came to the little town of Bethany, where Lazarus was raised from the dead. We began then to descend the Jericho road with the God-forsaken barren hills rising fold after fold on the right of the hills of Judea. Along the left of the road was the Good Samaritans



June", the original structure now being not much more than a heap of stones. One could well imagine the traveller being set upon by the thieves in this part. The road was very twisting & there were many places in which to hide in order to waylay an unwary traveller. The old road to Jericho now wound away to the left, but a new road takes a better route to the level land below. We were shown the site of the original town of Jericho which existed even before the time of Christ. Every now & then you can see traces of the original wall which surrounded the city (which was only small & covered only a few acres.) A wonderful flash water spring flows out of the ground at this spot & the water irrigates the gardens & crops & trees of the modern Jericho, snaps of which I have sent in my Valbum. Looking back to-
-wards the hills, we saw the



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6/

Account of Temptation, steep & rugged.
We took a turn off after
this & were driven a few miles
down to the Jordan River where
the Allenby Bridge crosses it.
We dis-embussed & walking to
the other side of the bridge, found
ourselves in another country - Trans-
-jordan. It began to get very
hot now, & perspiration ran
freely. We were of course some
distance below sea level even
at this spot, but when half
an hour later we were on the
shores of the Dead Sea, we were
almost 2000 feet below sea level
it was hotter still.

Well, the Dead Sea was an
amazing place - to swim in. It
gives you a feeling that you are
swimming in a sort of dream.
It is impossible to sink, of
course; in fact it is impossible
to swim as ones legs shoot
up out of the water. A four
engine British flying-boat
was riding at anchor a few



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ON ACTIVE SERVICE

7/
hundred yards, from shore.
fresh water showers are provided to
wash off the salt after a swim.
there is a large café on the
water's edge, & one can buy cold
drinks - at a price. there were
several Americans there when we
were. We left on the return
journey at 6 P.M. & were back at
the Hostel for dinner at 7.
It had been a wonderful day.

Next morning we visited
the "church of all nations" in the
garden of Gethsemane. One felt
very, very humble in this place,
& for some reason or other my
thoughts went back to you, Mum,
your goodness & sacrificial love
in bringing us up as children
in the way you did.

The olive trees in the
garden must be very, very old.
there are eight of them & their
trunks are huge, gnarled &
-cracked - yet the trees still
have considerable foliage. In
my album, I have enclosed



81

- a leaf from one of these trees.
We returned to the Hostel for lunch & in the afternoon I visited Bethlehem, not many miles really from Jerusalem. On the way we passed the Tomb of Rachel on the roadside. Before we reached Bethlehem we saw down to the left, a mile or two away, the "Shepherds' Fields" which to this day remain as fields for sheep & goats to graze upon. In Bethlehem is the Church of the Nativity, built over the birth place of Christ. It seems at first odd to find all the "Holy Places" - around these parts built over by churches, & yet one must remember that had this not been done the original places would have become destroyed or buried. Successive conquerors of the Holy Land of course did destroy - Jerusalem itself was destroyed several times -



9/

but the Holy Places have escaped a destruction. Some of the original structures built over sacred spots in early A.D. have been partly rebuilt, mainly by the Crusaders so that it is possible to see two floors in places, the old original one in mosaic a foot or more below a more recent one but constructed on the same pattern.

We saw the grotto in the rock - a cave really, where Jesus was born. The original rock is still there, very hard & old looking. Owing to the fact that the so-called manger has been built over by this "Church of the Nativity", one has to try & forget that the stone walls & roof exist - not an easy thing to do.

On our return to Jerusalem, we carried on right to the summit of the Mount of Olives from where a marvellous view was obtained, over all Jerusalem.



101

& looking in the opposite direction, to the Dead Sea, a portion of which we could see. We next stopped at the British War Cemetery on Mt. Scopus overlooking the city. Such a beautifully laid out & well-kept cemetery I had never seen before. The flowers & shrubs were a delight to the eye. We noted the names of several New Zealand soldiers who lie buried there - from the last war. In the centre of the area at the back is a beautiful stone memorial chapel designed by a New Zealander by the name of Bell. We spoke with the caretaker - a last war man who is in charge of all British War cemeteries in Palestine.

The next morning we went on a tour on foot, of old Jerusalem. I enjoyed every minute of our walk. Our guide was a fine old chap & although he wore a



11/

Moslem "flower-pot" hat or turbosh,
he belonged to the Christian faith.
We entered the old city through
one of its eight famous gates -
the Gaffa Gate. It was through
here that Lord Collyer entered
the city in 1917. Well the old
city was a maze of narrow
winding streets & lanes with
cobble-stones & was in most
respects similar to other native
towns of the East - with one
noticeable exception. There weren't
so many smells & one wasn't
continually being held up to buy
something as you are in
Cairo. This was very noticeable.
The streets were alive with
people young & old, all bent on
various tasks. There were whole
streets of vegetable shops: cabbages,
turns, smiths & so on. Now & again
you stepped aside to let a
donkey laden with goods go
by. We went this way & go
that, ever deeper into the



12/

heart of the old city & on rounding
a corner came suddenly to
an amazing sight - the Wailing
Wall with thousands of Jews of
both sexes all wailing & chanting
just as they have done for centuries.
I say again - it was an amazing
sight - so unexpected & so real.
It gave one a funny feeling
not easily described.

There was the wall, some 40 yds. in
length & 20 odd feet high, part
of the original temple wall
- & all along its length, the women
separate from the men, were Jews
of all ages pressed up against
the wall, some chanting from
open prayer books, some without.
They took no notice of us standing
there - or if they did notice us,
did not resent our intrusion.

Yes, it was an amazing sight.

We next entered the temple area
- an expanse of several acres
containing among other buildings
the big Moslem mosque of St.



Omgar." Our group had a photo taken on the steps leading up to the Mosque. It is in the front of my album. Well, this Mosque was very large & very beautiful inside. Solomon's famous temple stood quite near here, as also did the temple out of which Christ chased the money changers. This temple stood not far inside one of the gates in the wall - I have forgotten its name - opposite the garden of Gethsemane (which of course is outside the city wall.)

Here, we saw the very pool beside which Christ saw the poor old chap who was too crippled to get down into the water - which no doubt possessed mineral & curative properties. The pool was Bethesda. I climbed down well worn stone steps to get a good look at it (it has been built over & around during the centuries.)



NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FUND BOARD

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

144

Well, it is there all right, with crystal clear water, two or three feet deep in it. Some light came streaming down from through a hole in the roof above - & made everything quite visible.

Well, this will be enough for letter No. 2, & in my next I will tell you about "Via Robrosa," & the "Way of the Cross" of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre & of the remainder of my wonderful holiday in Palestine.

Love from your son,

Rewai